

PROVISIONAL PATENT APPLICATION

**CUSTOMIZABLE WEB SITE ACCESS
SYSTEM AND METHOD THEREFORE**

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Field of the Invention

The present invention relates to the manner in which a user of the World Wide Web accesses a web site and, more specifically, to a system and method to enable horizontal navigation of desirable web sites on the World Wide Web.

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Background of the Invention

Currently, global computer network users access web sites by accessing a single-source, static destination, e.g., a single web site address, and navigate vertically through multiple pages at a single destination. Additionally, current search engines provide access to multiple web sites that are directed to only a single topic or interest. As such, those users with diverse interests are still subject to having to navigate through multiple pages at a single destination by the click of a mouse, or to different, single-source destinations by the entry of a web address or by the selection of a "favorite" web site. This manner of navigating through diverse web sites is certainly not the most efficient use of the web.

Thus, for those users with diverse interests or for those users who have the need or the
20 desire to access multiple web site destinations on a consistent basis, there is a need for a web site
access system that would provide users with the ability to navigate the web in a horizontal,
customized manner. This horizontal navigation would preferably allow users to be consistently
presented with the web sites in which they are most interested, thereby allowing for more
efficient review and information-gathering from those portals.

Summary of the Invention

The needs described above are in large measure addressed by a customizable web site access system of the present invention. The system generally comprises a host computer that is in communication with a user terminal, which incorporates both a video monitor and a data entry 5 peripheral. The host computer incorporates a processor that executes a program to establish a user's desired manner of accessing various web sites. Specifically, the program executes to prompt a user to enter or select a set of desired web sites and to enter a desired display time for each of the entered or selected web sites. The program preferably additionally executes to prompt the user of the system to indicate whether they would like their set of desired web sites to automatically be replayed and/or the number of times the web sites should be replayed. Upon establishing the set of desired web sites, the program executes to display these web sites for the desired display time, in random or sequential order, and for the number of times desired.

10 The system preferably utilizes various screens to establish interaction with the user of the system. Specifically, the system preferably utilizes a data entry screen for entry of user 15 preferences and a display screen that includes a web site display area and a system-interactive user area.

Description of the Drawings

Fig. 1 is a block diagram depicting a customizable web site access system of the present 20 invention.

Fig. 2 is a flow chart depicting the operation of the customizable web site access system of the present invention.

Fig. 3 is an example of a web page for the entry of desired user data to be implemented through the customizable web site access system of the present invention.

Fig. 4 is an example of a header that may be displayed at the top of each web site accessed by the system of the present invention.

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Detailed Description of the Preferred Embodiments

A customizable web site access system of the present invention allows the experience of a user of the World Wide Web to be flexible -- not dedicated to a single controlling source.

Instead of navigating "vertically" through multiple pages at a single destination, the present system enables users to navigate "horizontally" across a range of destinations, accessing a single page at each destination. The system of the present invention operates to play a script of the user's desired portal experience by automatically directing their World Wide Web connection to pre-selected web site addresses for defined time periods.

Fig. 1 provides an overview block diagram of the customizable web site access system

10. As shown, system 10 generally comprises a host computer 12 that incorporates a central processing unit (CPU) 14 and memory 16 (internal or external) for storage of a program 30 that is executed by CPU 14. System 10 additionally incorporates a plurality of user terminals 18, e.g., personal computer, work station, data entry terminal, etc., that are in communication with host computer 12. Each user terminal preferably includes one or more input peripherals 20, e.g., 20 mouse, keyboard, disk drive, etc., at least one video monitor 22, and other output peripherals 24, e.g. data storage devices, disk drives, etc., as appropriate.

The operation of program 30, as executed by CPU 14, is shown in Fig. 2. As indicated, per input block 302, program 30 preferably prompts the user to enter user registration

information through input peripheral 20. The user registration information may be in the form of a name, password, or other type of user identifier. The user registration information is then transferred from user terminal 18 to host computer 12 where it is determined whether the registrant is a new registrant, per decision block 303. If the registrant is new, the new registrant 5 identifier is stored in memory 16, per stored data block 305, and the new registrant is prompted to enter their desired preferences (as described per option one below). If the registrant is not new, the registration identifier is verified, per operations block 304, to determine if the registration data corresponds to previously entered registration data that is stored in memory 16.

If the entered registration data does not correspond to previously entered registration data, 102 per decision block 306, the user is requested to enter their user information again, per input block 302. However, if the entered registration data does correspond to previously entered registration data, per decision block 306, the user is provided with two options: (1) modifying their previously entered desired preferences; or (2) using the previously entered settings, per decision block 318.

153 Option one follows the left-hand side of the flowchart of Fig. 2 and, as shown, the user is requested to input/modify their desired settings. Specifically, the user is requested to input their desired list of web sites through which they would like system 10 to sequence, per input block 308, or accept the default values of system 10, per input block 309. The user is also requested to input the desired duration of display for each listed web site, per input block 310, or accept the 20 default values of system 10, per input block 309. Alternatively, the user may enter a default duration to be used with each listed web site.

The user is further requested to enter the number of times they would like system 10 to replay their entered list of web sites, per input block 312, or accept the default values of system

10, per input block 309. Alternatively, the user may simply enter that they wish their entered list
of web sites to be continuously replayed. The user is also requested to enter the order in which
they would like their entered list of web sites to be displayed, i.e., in sequential order (the order
in which the user entered the web sites in their list) or in random order, per input block 314, or
5 accept the default values of system 10, per input block 309. Each of the user-entered preferences
is transferred from user terminal 18 to host computer 12 and stored in memory 16, per stored data
block 316.

Option two, using the previously entered settings, causes host computer 12 to recall from
memory 16 the registrant's settings. Specifically, host computer recalls the list of desired web
sites, the duration of display for each web site, the number of times to replay the list, and the
order in which the web sites are to be displayed.

Either option ultimately results in an automatic horizontal navigation of the user's list of
desired web sites, per operations block 320. The user is essentially presented with a slide show
of the web sites in which they are most interested. By utilizing system 10, the user's experience
in accessing the World Wide Web becomes analogous to browsing several publications
sequentially instead of reading a single publication in its entirety, i.e. accessing a single-source,
static-destination web site.

In the preferred embodiment of system 10, the user is prompted to enter their preferences
via interaction with a data entry screen 40 that is displayed on the user's video monitor 22. An
20 example of such a data entry screen is shown in Fig. 3. Data entry screen 40 preferably includes
a web site list field 42 that allows the user to enter a web site address (URL) and a duration of
display in a minute and second format (mm:ss). Data entry screen 40 also preferably includes a
default duration field 44 should the user not desire to enter a specific display time for each

entered web site address. Data entry screen 40 also preferably includes a replay field 46 to indicate the number of times to replay the list of desired web sites, or to indicate a continuous replay, and preferably includes an order field 48 to indicate sequential or random display. Of course, numerous other manners of obtaining a user's preferences may be used without departing 5 from the spirit or scope of the invention.

Upon displaying a user's list of desired web sites, system 10 preferably utilizes a display screen 50 that is presented on the user's video monitor 22. An example of such a display screen is shown in Fig. 4. Display screen 50 includes a web site display area 52 and a system-interactive user area 54. System-interactive user area 54 preferably includes a site field 56, a time remaining field 58, and a replay field 60. System-interactive user area 54 also preferably includes a pause 10 button 62, a site-forward button 64, a site-backward button 66, an edit options button 68, and a logout button 70.

Site field 56 provides an indication of the total number of web sites within a user's entered list and an indication of the current web site's location within the list, e.g., 4 of 12. Time remaining field 58 provides an indication of how much longer the current web site will be displayed before system 10 displays the next web site. Replay field 60 provides an indication of the requested number of replays for the entered web site list, or whether the replay is to be continuous.

Pause button 62 enables a user of system 10 to stop the sequencing of the list of web sites 20 and maintain the currently presented web site. Site-forward button 64 enables a user of system 10 to go to the next web site in the user-entered list or to go to the very last web site in the list. Site-backward button 66 similarly enables the user of system 10 to go to the previous web site in the user-entered list or to go to the very first web site in the list. Edit options button 68 enables a

user of system 10 to re-access data entry screen 40 to modify their entered preferences. Logout button 70 enables a user of system 10 to exit system 10 and return to vertical navigation of web sites. Of course, numerous other manners of interacting with the web site display of system 10 may be used without departing from the spirit or scope of the invention.

5 The present invention may be embodied in other specific forms without departing from the spirit of the essential attributes thereof; therefore, the illustrated embodiments should be considered in all respects as illustrative and not restrictive, reference being made to the appended claims rather than to the foregoing description to indicate the scope of the invention.